

**THE WEST AFRICAN EXAMINATIONS COUNCIL
HEADQUARTERS, ACCRA, GHANA**

MY SERVICE, MY LEGACIES, MY APPRECIATION

BY

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REGISTRAR/CHIEF EXECUTIVE
(OCTOBER 1, 2007 – SEPTEMBER 30, 2012)**

1.0 INTRODUCTION

I assumed office as the eleventh Registrar to Council on October 1, 2007.

By the Council's Convention, the Registrar is appointed for a five-year term that is renewable for another term not exceeding two years. But, I have, at every opportune forum, these past five years, made it clear that I would **not**, for any reason whatsoever, seek a renewal or extension of my five-year term. My decision not to seek a renewal of term was formally communicated to the International Administrative and Finance (A & F) Committee of Council at its 156th Meeting held in July 2011 at which I informed the Committee that I **had not sought** and **did not intend to seek** a renewal of my term. I requested the Committee, at that meeting, to approve the setting in motion of the Council's due process for the appointment of my successor in office with the placement of appropriate advertisements in the various member countries in August 2011. My request was approved. The position was advertised in August 2011; the short-listed candidates were interviewed by the International Appointments Committee in January 2012; the Committee forwarded the full details of the performance of the interviewed candidates to Council with a recommendation that the best performing candidate, Dr. Iyi Johnbull Uwadiae, be appointed; Council at its 60th Annual Meeting, accepted the recommendation and decided to appoint Dr. Uwadiae as my successor in office. The process of appointing my successor in office has been duly completed.

It is therefore, with great delight and unqualified gratitude to the Almighty Allah that I use this opportunity to formally share with you a few statements of my service, my legacies and my appreciation as I disengage as Registrar/Chief Executive.

I give every honour and glory to the Almighty Allah for the special grace which He granted me to serve.

2.0 MY SERVICE

2.1 My Vision

In my application for the post of Registrar to Council in August 2006, I indicated that I had a vision of "an excellent WAEC". I defined the **excellent WAEC** as *one that gives the pride of place to the accomplishment of its mandate in every member country and goes further to remain the lead-setter, lead-maintainer and lead-custodian of educational assessment standards in the West African sub-region and indeed in Africa; one that is uncompromisingly committed to building and sustaining an efficient service-delivery system; one that values educational research, not as an end in itself but as a means to the attainment of excellence in educational assessment and development; one that partners relevant international, professional organizations or agencies in the pursuit of excellence in educational assessment; one that believes that its strength lies in its staff and so, strives to adequately equip, enable and motivate every staff within the limits of available resources; one in which every staff is proud to*

belong and remain, seeing as his/her goal the accomplishment of the Council's Mission and the realization of the Council's Vision; one that recognizes and rewards hard work and other virtues while condemning and sanctioning indolence and other vices".

When by God's grace I was appointed, I set out with every determination to actualise my vision.

The Secretariat bought into the vision and, as a team, we worked together relentlessly. With every sense of humility, I believe that this great team that I have had the special privilege of leading in this journey of five years, has spared no effort and left no stone unturned in bringing about the actualisation of this vision.

2.2 Accomplishment of the Council's Vision, Mission and Mandate

I want to place it on records that, as members of *one team, one Secretariat*, we have, these past five years, applied ourselves with dogged commitment to the accomplishment of the Council's Vision, Mission and Mandate in all the Member Countries. It may be pertinent here to give a quick reminder of the Council's Vision, Mission and Mandate.

Vision - *to be a world class examining body, adding value to the educational goals of its stakeholders.*

Mission – *to be Africa's foremost examining body, developing and maintaining internationally-accepted procedures in examinations, providing qualitative and reliable educational assessment, encouraging academic and moral excellence among the youth, and promoting sustainable human resource development, mutual understanding and international cooperation.*

Mandate (at inception) – *to determine the examinations required in the public interest in the English-speaking West African countries, to conduct the examinations and to award certificates comparable to those of equivalent examining authorities internationally.*

By this mandate, the Council is expected to:

- 1. *assist in the development of sound education;*
- 1. *ensure that educational standards are maintained; and*
- 1. *give the people of West Africa a vision of the great potentials which lie beyond examinations.*

When I assumed office in October 2007, there were grave concerns regarding the terribly battered image of the Council in Liberia as well as the education reform programmes in Nigeria and Ghana and the impact that these might have on the status of the Council and its mandate.

The key issues in Nigeria had to do with the stand of the Federal Ministry of Education on the place of the appointment of the Head of the Nigeria National Office of the Council in the Education Reform Scheme and the introduction of the Converged Examination Management

Platform (CEMP). The issue of concern in Ghana was the addition of one year to the Senior Secondary School cycle and the uncertainty as to whether the examination to be written by the products of the new school system was going to be the West African Senior School Certificate Examination (WASSCE) or an entirely new examination. The image of the Council in Liberia got terribly battered as a result of the unprecedented mass leakage of all its May 2007 examination papers at all three levels (6th, 9th and 12th Grades) in the country consequent upon which some key officers of the Monrovia Office, including the then Head of National Office, eventually lost their jobs.

We thank God that, today, all the concerns have become history. There has been no leakage of any examination papers in Liberia after the May 2007 incident. The Federal Ministry of Education in Nigeria has since decided to defer to the Council's Convention by agreeing that the Council's due process for the appointment of Heads of National Office should continue to be applied and also by exempting the Council from the Converged Examination Management Platform. In Ghana, WASSCE has remained the terminal examination of the Senior High School course even with the change to and again from the 6344 system.

Throughout the five years of my tenure, my team and I ensured that our flagship organization continued to contribute to the development of sound education in all its Member Countries through the preparation and dissemination of relevant statistical data for policy decision-making. Statistical data on candidates' entries and performance, Chief Examiners' Reports, research reports and other publications that served and will continue to serve as feedback mechanisms and provide the basis for educational policy formulation and implementation in the West African sub-region were produced periodically.

We endeavoured to widen the scope of the Council's mandate by exploring all avenues for extending the Council's services, at least, to the French-speaking countries of West Africa. Inspection visits were paid to two schools, one in Dakar, Senegal and one in Bamako, Mali with a view to using these as inroads to the French-speaking West African countries. On the home front, our efforts at getting Liberia to join the rest of the Member Countries in the international examination system resulted in the Government of Liberia making a firm commitment to the agenda which set 2013 as the target date for joining the rest of the Member Countries in the WASSCE system.

We collaborated and cooperated well with stakeholders and examining bodies internationally. We exchanged benchmarking visits and discussed issues of mutual benefit with some of our foreign counterparts, especially in Africa.

We gave greater visibility to the Council in the global comity of Examining Boards. Within the last five years, the officers of the Council held key positions (President, Regional Representative, and Treasurer) in the Executive Committee of the Association for Educational Assessment in Africa (AEAA) and recorded top performance. Officers of the Council did not

only present papers at the annual conferences of AEEA and IAEA (International Association for Educational Assessment), they also served as Chairmen of sessions.

2.3 Building and Sustaining an Efficient Service-delivery System

All through my five-year tenure as Registrar/Chief Executive of WAEC, the team that I led strove to build and sustain an efficient service-delivery system for the Council. We considered every aspect of the Council's operations - from the development of test papers through the conduct of examination, processing and release of results, to the printing and issuance of certificates - as a service to its stakeholders and we were resolute in our commitment to the provision of qualitative and reliable educational assessment, conduct of hitch-free and leakage-free examinations, speedy processing and release of examination results, prompt issuance of certificates and delivery of an all-round, technology-driven service to the Council's numerous stakeholders within and outside its Member Countries.

2.3.1 Conduct of the Council's Examinations

In each of my five years in office, the Council's scheduled examinations – national and international, May/June and November/December – were all conducted successfully in all member countries, with no exception. The May/June and November/December editions of the Council's international examination, WASSCE, were conducted every year in The Gambia, Ghana, Nigeria and Sierra Leone. The Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE) and National Primary School Examination (NPSE) were conducted for candidates in Sierra Leone. The Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE), the General Business Certificate Examination (GBCE) and the Advanced Business Certificate Examination (ABCE) were conducted for candidates in Ghana. In addition to the Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE), the National Assessment Test (NAT) was, in 2009, added to the portfolio of National examinations conducted by the Council for candidates in The Gambia. In Liberia, the 6th, 9th and 12th Grades examinations were conducted until May 2010 when the Government decided to stop using the 6th Grade examination for the placement of pupils in junior high schools.

In general, the candidature for WASSCE increased from 1,937,341 in 2008 to 2,300,189 in 2011. This increase can be said to be a reflection of increasing access to education at the senior secondary school level, but more importantly, a measure of the confidence of stakeholders in WAEC examinations across the Member Countries.

2.3.3 Release of results

I am delighted to state that in the last two years of my tenure as Registrar to Council, the results of both the May/June and November/December WASSCE were released much earlier than in any year in the recent past in all the Member Countries. This was evidence that our efforts at deploying ICT to the various processes in the conduct of the Council's core business, especially in the areas of registration of candidates, capturing of candidates' scores at the marking venues and processing of examination results, were beginning to yield the desired dividends. We succeeded in progressively reducing the period for the processing of WASSCE results from an average of 131 days in May/June 2008 to an average of 84 days in May/June 2011 and from an

average of 137 days in November/December 2008 to an average of 72 days in November/December 2011.

The prompt release of results is part of the legacy which my team is bequeathing, with joy, to its successor in office.

2.3.4 Printing and Issuance of Certificates

When I assumed office in October 2007, the printing of certificates for the Council's examinations was in arrears of varying degrees in all the National Offices except Monrovia. The Lagos Office had printed certificates for WASSCE only up to May/June 2005. The Accra Office had printed certificates for BECE, SSSCE, ABCE and GBCE up to 2003. The Banjul Office had printed certificates for GABECE up to 2003 and WASSCE only up to 2001. The Freetown Office had printed certificates for both BECE and WASSCE up to 2003. The printing of certificates by the Monrovia Office was not in any arrears then.

As a team, we committed ourselves to clearing the backlog in each office and ensuring that certificates for every examination conducted by the Council are issued within one year from the last day of the examination concerned. Happily, we have achieved that feat in all offices **except** Freetown.

The Banjul and Monrovia Offices have printed the certificates for all their examinations (Banjul - GABECE and WASSCE; Monrovia - LJHSCE and LSHSCE) up to the November/December 2010 series of examinations.

The Accra and Lagos Offices have printed the certificates for all their examinations (Accra - BECE, ABCE, GBCE and WASSCE; Lagos - WASSCE) up to the November/December 2011 series of examinations and are working assiduously to complete the printing of the certificates for the May/June 2012 series of examinations before March 2013.

The Freetown Office, as at now, has printed certificates for the period May/June 2004 to May/June 2008 series of examinations and is making effort to ensure the completion of the printing of certificates up to May/June 2010 by December 2012.

I believe, without any attempt at being immodest, that the clearing of the backlog of unprinted certificates is one achievement for which this administration will be remembered and the prompt printing and issuance of certificates is one other legacy which it is bequeathing to its successor in office.

2.6 Building and Sustaining an Efficient Service-Delivery System

Computerization and the deployment of ICT to various aspects of our service delivery occupied the centre stage in all offices of the Council throughout my five-year tenure. Despite the constraint posed by the lean resources at our disposal, all the offices strove to advance in the

acquisition of ICT equipment and facilities to a level that can enable the Council to deliver its services more promptly and with greater efficiency within and beyond its Member Countries.

As a team, we succeeded in bringing the various offices to a comparable level of ICT deployment to service delivery. Five years ago, the Nigeria National Office was the only one that had moved from manual to electronic registration of candidates for WASSCE. Today, registration of candidates for all examinations conducted by the Council is done electronically in all National Offices without exception. In the same vein, candidates in all member countries can now check their results online real time.

The operations of the Accounts and Audit Departments at the WAEC International Office in Lagos have been computerized and the networked. The Council is already reaping the benefits of the computerization as evidenced by the External Auditors' Report on the 2010 Accounts of the Headquarters which stated, for the first time ever, that there were no issues raised on the Headquarters' Financial Statements for the 2010 financial year.

Meetings of Council and its international Committees have gone paperless. We started exploring the possibility of installing the necessary facilities for video-conferencing/tele-presence in key locations in the Council's offices. The *Paperless Office Project* of the Headquarters, Accra is also receiving very serious attention.

We redesigned, upgraded and updated the existing websites to serve as a tool for reaching out more effectively to the Council's publics worldwide while new ones were created in offices where none existed. The Headquarters continued to enrich its website with vital information on the operations of the Council, advertisement of vacancies, available consultancy services, research reports, seminar papers, etc, to make it serve its purpose of being a veritable vessel for reaching out to the Council's numerous stakeholders. Because the Headquarters' website has been linked directly to those of the National Offices, it is possible to navigate all the websites through that of the Headquarters and access even country-specific data there from. There is increasing evidence that this window of opportunity to access information about the Council is being utilised by stakeholders. This is a confirmation that our dream of the website becoming, among others in the not-too-distant future, an income-generating device, is not only realisable but could be realised sooner than later.

We revised some existing operational manuals while some new ones were prepared.

2.7 Equipping, Enabling, Motivating, Rewarding and Sanctioning Staff

It will not be an overstatement to say that the last five years witnessed a significant increase in staff establishment and a corresponding increase in staff strength in all offices. In addition we introduced, in all offices without exception, a series of staff welfare packages that aimed at improving the lot of our officers and staff, boosting their morale and motivating them to continue to give of their best in the service of the Council.

We recognized and rewarded hard work and other virtues through commendation, upgrading and promotion of deserving officers. We drastically reduced, if not completely cleared, the number of officers who had hitherto stagnated as a result of inadequate establishment. At the same time, we never hesitated to bring erring staff to book in accordance with the Council's extant regulations.

We pursued with zeal our set policy of building the capacity and sharpening the skills of our staff as well as of our item writers, moderators and examiners. We commenced, in most offices, electronic capturing of candidates' scores by examiners at marking venues. The dividend from our investment in the acquisition of ICT equipment, complemented with human capital development, is the prompt release of results which now takes place in just about 75 days after an examination.

2.8 Capital Projects

Various capital projects were undertaken by the National Offices and the Headquarters within the past five years. Key among these are the construction of some Zonal and Branch Offices by the Nigeria National Office; Examination Hall, Offices, Security Printing House and Guest House by the Ghana National Office; Regional Office and Printing House by the Liberia National Office; and Guest House, Conference/Events Centre and Administrative Block by the Headquarters in Lagos. These projects will, among others, enhance the security and integrity of the Council's test papers, save cost and boost the internally generated revenue of the National Offices and the Headquarters so that in the years ahead, the Council will be less dependent on its Member Governments for financial survival. The passionate pursuit of ventures that are aimed at cutting costs, increasing internally generated revenue and reducing dependence on government funding without compromising the security of the Council's examinations is another legacy which my team is delighted to pass on to the in-coming Administration.

2.9 Five-Year Strategic Plan

The process of developing a 5-Year Strategic Plan for the Council started in 2009 and the final Plan document was approved by Council at its 60th Annual Meeting in March 2012. I see the preparation of the Strategic Plan as significant and its approval at the 60th Meeting of Council as strategic. My hope is that the implementation of the Strategic Plan will set the direction in which the Council will navigate and the level which it will attain in the global business of educational assessment in the next five years. My expectation is that the implementation of the plan will put the Council light years ahead of its competitors.

2.10 Challenges

Funding and the scourge of examination malpractice stood out as the two major challenges with which the Council had to grapple in my five-year tenure as Registrar to Council.

2.11 Funding

Examination fees are expected to constitute the main source of funding the operations of the Council. The Council is, however, not allowed by government to charge even the economic fee

for any of its examinations. Over the years, the standing agreement between the Council and its Member Governments has been that the Council would enjoy budgetary allocation in the form of Government Subvention to the National Offices and Government Contribution to the Headquarters. Incidentally, there was no single year the Headquarters received its full budgetary allocation from Governments during my tenure. The situation was the same or very similar in the National Offices. We had to continue to use every available opportunity to remind some Member Governments of the need to fulfil their financial obligations to the Council.

2.12 Examination Malpractice

The incidence of examination fraud in its various forms was indeed a daunting challenge. All told, we were relentless in our resolve to remain on top of the challenge of examination fraud. And I dare say we succeeded, to a very great extent in making the leakage of our question papers a thing of the past. Conducting in five years, nine consecutive leakage-free series of national examinations out of ten in all Member Countries (indeed ten out of ten in Ghana, Sierra Leone and Liberia) and seven consecutive leakage-free series of international examinations out of ten in Ghana, nine out of ten in Nigeria and ten out of ten in Sierra Leone and The Gambia is evidence of our huge success. The conduct of this number of leakage-free examinations in these past five years is, perhaps, *the icing on the cake* of achievements recorded by this administration and one that deserves every effort and sacrifice to sustain in the years ahead.

Gladdening and cheering as this is, however, I must hasten to register my deep worry that other forms of examination malpractice have persisted in the Council's examinations in all the Member Countries. Principal among these are *collusion*, *mass cheating* and the *use of cell phones to cheat*. Most disheartening is the revelation that countries where examination malpractice was relatively unknown in the past, have started to record a number of cases, some of them perpetrated with astounding sophistication.

Examination malpractice, in whatever form it takes, is a societal problem that has its roots mainly in the candidates' lack of self-confidence and their fear of failure, both of which stem from inadequate preparation for the examination. Of course, there are a whole lot of other factors, including misplaced societal values that can aid the breeding and perpetration of examination fraud. It is my humble opinion that the point at which to start the fight against examination malpractice is the provision of facilities and equipment in schools, recruitment, training and retention of the right quality and number of teachers, creation of an atmosphere that is conducive for teaching and learning, promulgation and enforcement of relevant legislations, and of course, public sensitization and advocacy against the evil that examination fraud constitutes.

May I use this opportunity to appeal to all stakeholders in education to partner the Council in fighting examination malpractice to a standstill. The Council, on its part, must continue to be extra-vigilant at every stage in its process of conducting credible examinations in the Member Countries and sharpen its established monitoring systems to detect and sanction examination

impropriety in whatever form it takes. This is a responsibility which my team has shouldered creditably for the past five years and which it is now passing on to the in-coming team.

3.0 MY LEGACIES

From the foregoing, the following can be said to constitute the main legacies which my Administration is handing over to the incoming one:

- 1 Accomplishment of the Vision, Mission and Mandate of WAEC;
- 1 Passionate commitment to the core values of WAEC;
- 1 Conduct of leakage-free examinations;
- 1 Prompt Release of Results;
- 1 Prompt printing and issuance of Certificates;
- 1 Deployment of ICT to service delivery in all spheres of the Council's business;
- 1 Prudent Management of Resources;
- 1 Commitment to proper implementation of the Council's 5-Year Strategic Plan;
- 1 Passion for pursuit of ventures that would boost internally generated revenue (IGR)..

4.0 My Appreciation

I consider myself fortunate and divinely favoured to have had the calibre of men and women in the team that I have been privileged to lead in these past five years of my service as Registrar to Council. The modest successes and achievements recorded by the Council in my tenure have been facilitated largely by the understanding, support and encouragement which I enjoyed from members of the team, individually and collectively. I therefore want to appreciate the team's front runners – Heads of National Office, Heads of Department at the Headquarters, Heads, International Office and Research Department, Lagos, as well as other members of the Registrar's Planning and Coordinating Committee. Through the team's front runners, I want to extend my appreciation to all members of the larger team - all officers and staff of WAEC at the Headquarters and in all the offices - who together, constitute the force behind the modest achievements which my Administration has recorded. Together as a team in the last five years, we pushed the boundaries, we broke new grounds and we took our great organization to a whole new level. I feel very proud to be associated with each and every member of the team. And, as I say *well done, keep the flag flying higher and higher and higher*, I can only hope that my successor in office will enjoy the same amount of support as I did (and indeed more) so that the in-coming Administration will do even better and attain even greater heights.

I like to place on record my sincere appreciation of the past and present Chairmen and Vice Chairmen of Council, Leaders of Delegation and Members of Council, Members of the various International and National Committees of Council, Members of the Board of Trustees of the Endowment Fund, as well as former Registrars to Council and former Heads of National Office for their support and words of encouragement throughout my tenure.

My appreciation goes to the Governments of all the Member Countries of the Council for their continued belief and confidence in the Council, and for striving hard to sustain the Council, even in the face of scourging economic meltdown. I am most grateful to all government functionaries who have remained the link between the Council and their respective governments and whose doors were open to the Council at all times during my tenure. These functionaries include the Honourable Ministers of Education, Permanent Secretaries/Chief Directors, Directors and other top officials in the Ministry of Education of each Member Country.

I also wish to appreciate the Council's service providers who have continued to make the successful conduct of the Council's business achievable. They include the item writers, item moderators, supervisors, invigilators, examiners and script checkers. There is nothing the Council could have achieved without their cooperation.

4.0 CONCLUSION

I feel highly privileged and divinely favoured to have been opportune to work in WAEC and serve my Creator through my service to Mankind. I was appointed an Assistant Registrar II on May 1, 1977 and I assumed office on May 2, 1977. Incidentally, that was my 26th birthday. By God's grace, I was sixty-one years old on May 2, 2012. By simple arithmetical calculation, I have spent more years in the Council than outside it.

I make bold to say, without any attempt at being immodest, that mine have been years of devotion to duty and commitment to the ideals for which the Council stands. Having started my career in WAEC as an Assistant Registrar – the lowest rank of international staff - I feel very much fulfilled that I am ending it at the very top as Registrar/Chief Executive of the Council.

I shall remain eternally grateful to Allah for granting me, throughout my five-year tenure, the grace of life, sound health, physical and inner strength, and divine guidance to discharge successfully my responsibilities as Registrar to Council. I thank Him even for the coincidence of the end of my tenure with the Council's *Diamond Jubilee* and I pray that just as *diamonds are forever*, so may WAEC be.

*Farewell, All
Fare Thee Well
For my work in WAEC is done
And my race here is run
Thirty-five years and a half
May 1977 to September 2012
Years of service, I strove to give
Years of diligence in all I did
Years of commitment to excellence
Never a moment of indolence
Now my exit in peace and honour I take
My well-deserved rest to take*

*For my eyes have seen the glory of WAEC
And on my lips is the success story of WAEC
As I bow out today in honour
With gratitude to God and All
One wish only do I want to make
That those of you who remain in service
Will continue to give of your best
Holding the banner of WAEC high
Flying the flag of WAEC higher
So that as **DIAMONDS ARE FOREVER**
So **WAEC MAY FOREVER BE***

*Farewell, my beloved All
Fare thee well*

*If we meet again, we shall surely smile
If not, this parting is surely bright
Farewell, All
Fare thee well.*

*Mulikat A. Bello (Alhaja, Mrs.)
September 2012*